



**Veterans Health Administration**  
**Montana VA Health Care System**

## Press Release

Fort Harrison VA  
Public Affairs Office  
(406) 447-7303  
[www.montana.va.gov](http://www.montana.va.gov)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2018

Media contact(s): Mike Garcia, [mike.garcia@va.gov](mailto:mike.garcia@va.gov), 406-447-7303

### Montana VA Primary Care Provider Staffing Update for February 2018

**Fort Harrison, Mont.** – The Montana VA Health Care System has recently received numerous inquiries concerning primary care provider vacancies across the state.

The Montana VA executive leadership team wants our Veterans, their families and the public to know the facts:

- The reports of widespread unavailability of primary care in the Montana VA are false.
- We currently require 37.1 full-time equivalent employee (FTEE) providers to care for our Veterans.
- As of Feb. 9, there are 33.45 FTEE (38 individual providers) on hand and seeing patients.
- There are 5.5 current FTEE (8 individual providers) who have given notice they will be leaving or reducing their hours
- As of Feb. 9, there are a total of 8.5 FTEE (10 individual providers) scheduled to join the Montana VA between March 5 thru the end of May.
- There are currently 2.0 FTEE vacant positions (one in Billings and one at Fort Harrison) without a known replacement and active recruitment efforts are underway
- Gaps in coverage are being managed with telehealth providers from other sites and with locum tenens providers.

“There is a nationwide shortage of primary care providers and in rural states like Montana the shortage can be even more significant,” said Dr. Kathy Berger, Director of the Montana VA Health Care System. “Although primary care provider staffing is always fluid, I am confident that we have what we need to serve our Veterans through direct care, telehealth, or community care at all of our locations.”

As of February 9, 2018	FTEE*	Notes
Required	37.1	To support the 39 primary care teams across the state
On-Hand	33.45	Across all 15 sites providing primary care
Vacant	3.65	Across eight sites of care; 2.0 FTEE without current replacement identified
Known Loss/Reduction	5.50	Across five sites of care
Known Gains	8.5	Across seven sites; Physician (3.5), Nurse Practitioner (4.0); Physician Assistant (1.0)

\* FTEE = full-time equivalent employee

*The Montana VA Health Care System serves Veterans across Montana, an area roughly 147,000 square miles in size. Our 47,000 enrolled Veterans are supported with a staff of about 1,200 (over a third are Veterans themselves) at 17 sites of care across the state including: the Fort Harrison VA hospital, the Billings Health Care Center, eleven Community Based Outpatient Clinics, two Primary Care Tele-health Outreach Clinic, the Miles City Community Living Center, and the Helena Sleep Disorders Center. The Montana VA is proud of the support it receives from over 500 volunteers and its innovative approach to rural healthcare.*

*Media interested in this event/story should contact the **local media contact** indicated. For general inquiries regarding the VA, please contact the VA Montana Health Care System Public Affairs office at Fort Harrison at (406) 447-7303.*